



PERIMETERS in PARAGRAPHS



(Based upon latest information available at date of writing, and subject to correction as more complete reports are received.)

By Colonel Conrad H. Lanza

NORTH AFRICA

Losses of the forces engaged in the four days of fighting resulting from the American invasion of Morocco and Algeria commencing November 8th were

American	360 killed	1,050 wounded	600 missing
French	490	969	none.

The American figures are approximate only. The missing are supposed to have been drowned from loss of some ships from enemy air and sea action.

With the stopping of French resistance as a result of an accord arrived at between the American commander (Lieut. Gen. Eisenhower) and the French High Commissioner (Admiral Darlan, recently deputy Chief of State for France), the French cooperated with the American Army on and after November 12th. All feelings of enmity between the Americans and French disappeared. It was agreed that French troops would join the Allies in an invasion of Tunisia, which was to be undertaken at an early date.

The British Lieut.-Gen. Kenneth A. N. Anderson was assigned to command the expeditionary force to be organized for this purpose. At Algiers on the evening of November 9th he reported to General Eisenhower for this duty. The British First Army was to form the nucleus of the proposed invading force, but was to be reinforced by American units and as many French ones as practicable. Maj. Gen. Charles W. Ryder, U. S. A., was assigned as second in command to General Anderson. At this date there was no enemy in Tunisia. That state, ruled by a Dey, had been handed by the American Consul General (on November 8th) a letter from President Roosevelt announcing the intention of the Allies to send troops through his country for the purpose of protecting it against the Axis, and for the further mission of advancing on Axis forces in Tripolitania. The good offices of the Dey were solicited. As far as known, the Dey never replied to this letter.

The first Axis forces in Tunisia arrived on 10 November. According to British Intelligence reports they numbered about 1,000, and thereafter arrived fairly regularly at about the same rate per day. The initial landing of troops from the British First Army was on the 11th, at Bougie, a good

port east of Algiers. This was discovered by the enemy air reconnaissance, and during the day a violent air attack was made on the port of Bougie. The British have admitted loss of ships, without disclosing just what they were; the Axis claims they sank two transports and damaged twelve others.

On November 12th more British troops commenced to land at Bone. As this was close to the Tunisia border, motorized units were at once sent out and established an outpost at La Calle, 50 miles to the east and just outside Tunisia. The enemy air force again bombed Bougie and also Bone, and claim to have sunk and damaged numerous transports and some escorting naval vessels.

Thereafter the British troops landed rapidly. Two columns were organized: the north one was to advance along the coast road and railroad, a south column to advance along the main railroad from Algiers to Tunis, initially east from Gueban. French troops in Algeria were forwarded as fast as possible, and assigned the task of protecting the right of the First Army by advancing across the mountains toward the Tunisian city of Sousse, a secondary port. To facilitate this mission American parachutists were (on November 15th) dropped at the Algerian airfield near Youks-les-Bains to give our air forces an advanced field to operate from.

On the 16th British parachutists were dropped at Souk el-Arba (Tunisia), on the road assigned to the south column and leading to Tunis. American troops arrived to join the British. The delay in moving forward was caused by the blocking of harbors by air attacks, which the enemy made daily and which interfered with the forwarding of needed materiel and supplies. On this day the enemy air forces started an intensive machine gunning and bombing of roads and railroads leading to the front, which helped prevent completion of preparations. However, the advance crossed the Tunisia frontier in three columns—two British and one French—on the 17th.

On November 18th the north column had its advance guard attacked 20 miles east from Tabarca by a German force of about a battalion of infantry supported by 30 light tanks. A restricted but severe action resulted in the enemy retiring after losing 11 of his tanks. As he



retreated he destroyed bridges and arranged obstacles to delay the British advance.

On the 19th the south column encountered strong opposition as it neared Medjez el-Bab. The French right column intervened to aid the British. British parachutists were hastily rushed up. The enemy, supported by dive bombers, made four separate attacks; the French are reported to have lost heavily. The enemy held on to Medjez el-Bab. French patrols on this day reached the general vicinity of Sfax and Gabés, but Axis troops were between these patrols and the main French force.

On the 20th the British north column continued eastward and had another brush with the German infantry and tanks, whom they again drove off. A light British motorized column sent toward Mateur found that town occupied by the enemy; failing to drive him out, they rejoined their main body.

During the next three days the Allies deployed and prepared to make a general attack against the line Mateur—Tebourba—Medjez el-Bab. There was considerable patrol activity and some 40 enemy prisoners were brought in. A new task force was detailed to operate between the north and south columns. It consisted mostly of armored units and was to be in readiness to operate independently or with either or both the north and south columns.

On November 24th the advance of all columns started. The north column marched on Mateur, the south one on Medjez el-Bab, the mixed liaison column toward Tebourba. Upon arriving in the vicinity of the enemy's positions attack was deferred until next day. On the 25th the south column of British Guard troops delivered an attack on Medjez el-Bab. The attack started during the night of 24/25 November against the high ground west of the town. At dawn it was pressed forward with strong artillery and air support. Medjez el-Bab lies on the east slope of a hill which had to be carried first. The enemy made a stubborn defense but by afternoon withdrew eastward, leaving the town in British hands. Some American units participated in this action.

The mixed liaison column in the center passed around Tebourba and arrived at an airfield near Djedeida, about 6 miles northeast of Tebourba. They destroyed 40 enemy planes found on the field. An enemy armored force now appeared and attacked, and a tank battle occurred. The enemy was driven off, losing 18 of his tanks while only 7 Allied tanks were disabled.

No special fighting took place next day. The north column appears to have stopped before Mateur. The allied estimate of the situation was that the Axis was on the defensive and was unable to do anything more than delay the allied advance, principally through demolitions.

On November 27th the mixed liaison detachment attacked Tebourba from the north while the south column attacked from the south. Between the two, the enemy was forced out. He counterattacked later but lost 10 of his tanks. Rain set in, and it became very muddy. Usually the rain came in short but very heavy downpours lasting about an hour at a time. When not raining the days were very hot, while the nights were bitter cold. Troops were in shelter tents. The native population disappeared—another horde of refugees.

On the 28th the mixed liaison detachment was changed over to operate with the north column in a joint operation against Mateur. It retained a detachment east of Djedeida. On the 29th the enemy attacked this detachment suddenly, while the main force was around Mateur. The enemy recaptured Djedeida, claiming that he took over 200 prisoners.

A British regiment of Lancers, now mounted on motor vehicles, counterattacked Djedeida November 30th, after that place had been first bombed by American planes. They succeeded in entering the town but could not capture all of it. The enemy secured a few prisoners, sufficient for identification purposes. While this action was in progress the attack on Mateur commenced. The first objective was a hill north from Jefua. After an all-day fight the British failed to take it.

The allied attacks on Mateur and Djedeida were ordered continued the next day. That on Djedeida started with an artillery preparation at 0745; but instead of our troops attacking, the enemy attacked first not only at Djedeida but also at Tebourba. A severe battle commenced, and soon afterward the enemy attacked near



Mateur. In view of this situation the Allies' mixed liaison detachment was sent back to the center and does not appear to have engaged in the general action which soon covered nearly the entire front. The enemy's attack from Mateur north of Jefua was repulsed by the north column, and no change in the line took place here. At Djedeida, the enemy's tank attack was stopped by artillery fire which disabled 7 of his 25 tanks; here he made only minor gains.

A very strong enemy tank attack supported by dive bombers and much artillery made progress against Tebourba from the beginning. Notwithstanding the resistance of the British south column, with which United States troops were serving, the enemy recaptured this town

and compelled our troops to withdraw southwest toward Medjez el-Bab. This left a dangerous gap in the line which the British First Army closed by ordering the mixed liaison detachment to take over this part of the front by establishing a new line on the high ground west from Tebourba. The enemy did not interfere with this.

Next day the enemy did not press his attack but confined himself to minor operations to improve his newly captured positions. More American troops, rushed to near Tebourba, arrived in time to enable the withdrawal of British troops who had been threatened with being encircled. The Axis reports that in the two days' fight they captured about 200 prisoners and destroyed some 30 to 40 British or American armored vehicles.

On December 3d minor Axis offensives continued. Some British parachutists were dropped in rear of the Axis lines. It seems that they fell just near a place where a battalion of Italian Bersaglieri (special infantry type) happened to be, who report capturing the entire detachment of about 300 men. German reports claim that in improving their lines near Tebourba they took 456 more prisoners. These losses were partly compensated for by a French success in the south, where they captured several hundred German prisoners in an advance near Sidi bon-Zid.

Next day the enemy renewed his attack, advancing westward from Tebourba. He used tanks, artillery, and dive bombers, and made substantial advances. As this threatened a penetration of the Allied line, the British First Army ordered a withdrawal of the center to a new position which would extend in an almost straight line from Mateur (held by enemy) to Medjez el-Bab (to Allies). This eliminated the bulge near Tebourba and involved the abandonment of Djedeida, but it shortened the front from around 45 miles to only 25 miles. The enemy followed on this and the next day and reports taking in all 1,100 prisoners, 70 tanks, and 41 guns. The Allies have made no claims as to Axis losses during the battle of Tebourba. On the 6th the enemy renewed his attack, pushing southwest from Teboura, and in face of the strength of his forces the allies after confused fighting fell back to below El Guerra, a small town 10 miles from Tebourba.

On December 10th the enemy delivered two attacks against Medjez el-Bab. One came from the north on the west side of the Medjerda River, from territory acquired in the battle of Tebourba; this was immediately counterattacked by British and American armored forces. The other enemy attack came from the southeast and was opposed by French troops. Both attacks were repulsed, and both sides lost an undetermined number of tanks. Further fighting occurred in this area on the 12th, without materially changing the situation.

Action now shifted to the south, while in the north a temporary stabilization set in. On the 19th French troops advanced on Kairouan on the road to Sousse. They were attacked before they reached Kairouan; the enemy was repulsed, but he held on to the city. More fighting took place in succeeding days without either side being able to overcome the other. A second French advance against Sousse was started on the 21st by a French column moving southeast from the vicinity of Pont du Fahs. This column had considerable success next day, taking numerous prisoners and some guns and tanks. On the 23rd the enemy counterattacked both French advances and (although he made no gains) the advances came to a temporary halt.

On the 23rd the south British column made an attack opposite Tebourba near Medjez el-Bab. After a heavy downpour the moon shone and before dawn American and British troops moved forward in trucks preceded by small detachments which mopped up enemy security

detachments. The attack toward Tebourba failed to obtain any success, but that near Medjez el-Bab captured some high ground. Next day the Axis counterattacked, quite heavy fighting developed on this hill, and the enemy succeeded in regaining a foothold and taking some American prisoners. To clear him off a new Allied attack was planned for that night. Just at dusk the Allied artillery fired a 24-minute preparation. The infantry then moved forward. German counterbattery from 88-mm. batteries replied to our artillery and secured a narrow bracket on some of our guns, inflicting not a few casualties. Our infantry went forward in the night, and just before midnight secured their objectives.

At dawn on Christmas day the enemy made a new attack on the hill and swept the Allies off the crest. Although the weather was rainy and windy, a new counterattack was prepared and later launched. This resulted in recapturing most of the hill. The fighting was severe. No report of casualties has been announced from either side, and neither claims taking prisoners, but it appears that the losses were probably heavy. This hill was abandoned by the Allies on December 28th.

On December 26th the French made another advance from southeast of Pont du Fahs toward Sousse, taking 100 prisoners. It was announced that these French troops were being supported by American planes and were being reequipped with American arms.

In the middle of November the British Eighth Army was in Libya, pursuing the forces of Marshal Rommel, who was retiring eastward. On the 19th the British entered Bengasi without opposition, the enemy retiring to the vicinity of El Agheila. As this is a good defensive position which Rommel had held successfully once before, it was believed that he might stand there again. The British were obliged to delay an attack until they could bring forward supplies; they were ready on December 12th.

Rommel immediately retired from El Agheila without making any fight. He left the roads behind him full of mines and obstacles, the clearing of which necessitated such a delay that a close pursuit was impracticable. The British sent a light mechanized column across country to go around the enemy's flank. On the 16th this column, after a very difficult march, reached Wadi Matratin, where it turned south from near the coast and occupied a position believed to be in the midst of the enemy's columns and thereby cutting off all that portion of his forces which were to the east.

How Rommel escaped from this scrape has not yet been explained. But he did, and his retreat was not thereafter substantially interfered with. As these lines are written, the Axis troops have withdrawn to near Misurata.

COMMENTS

How far Rommel will retreat is an important question. He may retire into Tunisia, or he may stop and attempt to hold Tripoli. Should the Axis abandon Tripolitania and concentrate in Tunisia, they would have an excellent defensive position

against a force coming from Tripolitania. This extends westwards from Gabés and consists of a series of depressions, salt marshes, and lakes, with but few passageways across in about 400 kilometers. This line is discussed in all French plans for the defense of French North Africa, and is considered by them as a line which is almost impregnable. The French had prepared some fortifications, posts, wells, etc., on and near this line. Tripoli can of course be defended, but it has not any natural defenses.

President Roosevelt's letter to the Dey of Tunisia, together with a similar one to the French Resident General at Tunis, warned the Axis of the allied intention of seizing Tunisia and advancing from there into Tripolitania. However, this merely confirmed an estimate as to our intentions, which the Axis would undoubtedly have arrived at. They then promptly proceeded to Tunisia first.

According to British Intelligence reports of December 4th, it was believed that the Axis had not succeeded in landing over

9,000 troops around Bizerte and Tunis, plus an unstated number at ports further south. Up to the beginning of December the British First Army's estimate was that the enemy was on the defensive. His offensive delivered on the 1st and succeeding days appears to have been a surprise. The estimate of December 11th raised the strength of the enemy in north Tunisia up to 23,000. Additional enemy troops were known to be at Sousse, Sfax, and Gabés, but it was believed these were not strong.

It is possible that the enemy has even more troops than indicated. Notwithstanding constant efforts to intercept his sea and air convoys, a sizable proportion have gotten through. He has had, however, considerable losses. According to radio broadcasts, some large convoys with tanks, artillery, and other heavy materiel have crossed from Italy to Tunis during fogs which protected them from attacks. There is no way at this time to verify this statement, but that the enemy has numerous tanks and considerable artillery is indisputable.

THE SOUTHWEST PACIFIC

THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

On Guadalcanal Island our occupation has not been seriously threatened since October. Japanese troops were landed on that island on the night of 2/3 November, in numbers estimated at about 1,500. They have appeared only as replacements, and have been gradually eliminated by frequent patrol encounters, sought for and regularly won by our Marines and soldiers. Daily Japanese losses from this cause are reported as around 50 a day. At this rate the entire 1,500 men would have been absorbed within a month.

The most valuable installation on Guadalcanal which we hold is Henderson Field. It has been steadily improved by constant work, and by the latter half of November it was possible to base the largest military planes on that airfield. This has made it possible to bomb enemy installations at the maximum flying range from Guadalcanal. Rabaul, an important enemy base, is now bombed from Guadalcanal instead of from Australia, as had hitherto been necessary.

The Japanese have also improved an air base which they held near Munda on New Georgia Island, less than 200 miles from Henderson Field. American bombers almost daily raid this place both by day and night. They have destroyed all buildings which could be seen from the air and have downed many Zero fighters protecting Munda, against very small American losses. The enemy occasionally retaliates by bombing Henderson Field at night. Only a few planes come over at any one time, and the damage they have caused so far has been slight.

On the night 30 November - 1 December the Japs sent a naval surface force towards Guadalcanal. This was intercepted by our own Navy off Savo Island, just off the north end of Guadalcanal and the scene of several previous naval encounters. The night battle lasted only 20 minutes, commencing at 2317. The enemy used torpedoes at a range of about 4,500 yards. There was little gun firing. Our Navy reports that no Japanese landed on Guadalcanal, which presumably was the mission of the enemy's task force.

Instead they lost 3 transports and 6 destroyers, a few survivors being picked up the following morning. Against this we lost one cruiser, with damage acknowledged to an unstated number of other ships. The Japanese deny that they had any transports, and explain their presence in these waters as that of a torpedo flotilla attacking U. S. naval vessels. They admit the loss of only 1 destroyer and claim to have sunk several American ships (including a cruiser of the *Augusta* class, which was the only identification they made).

Another Japanese naval force was discovered by the Air Force approaching Guadalcanal at about 1800, December 11th. It consisted of 11 destroyers, also presumably bringing replacements to put ashore. Our Air Force attacked just before dark, with undetermined results. U. S. Navy surface forces intercepted the Japs (again near Savo Island) a little after midnight, and in the resulting engagements sank one enemy destroyer and damaged two others. One American motor torpedo boat was lost. What became of the uninjured Japanese destroyers, and whether these landed replacements on Guadalcanal, is not known.

Up to the end of December patrol activity on Guadalcanal continued constant, with a gradual enlargement (toward the west) of the American-held area. Bombing of Japanese bases to the north, made more practicable by the improvement of Henderson Field, is being intensified, with very special attention to Munda on New Georgia Island.

In general, both sides in the Solomon Islands have been on the defensive since October.

NEW GUINEA

At the beginning of November the Japanese in that part of New Guinea known as Papua held only a narrow strip of coast land extending from Gona to Buna (both inclusive) and in all some 10 miles long. This stretch of territory had been the objective of a joint force of Americans and Australians who had invested it and were actively engaged in a campaign to reduce it.

This strip is lowland. Back of the beach it is heavily

prepared fortifications. They fought until the last man was killed. They did not remove their dead—could not do it, but kept on fighting alongside decaying corpses. Some Japs, before death reached them, concealed grenades about themselves so that if our troops picked up their dead bodies for burial they would explode the grenades and kill themselves. By a strange quirk of the mind they prepared letters to their families in Japan advising them of their approaching deaths, and having placed appropriate addresses on the same, left them in prominent places to be picked up and forwarded by the Red Cross.

The same day that Gona was entered the right of the allied attack was at Cape Endaiadere. Although under direct attack, Buna was resisting strongly. By daily small advances the allies slowly moved forward, rolling up the enemy flanks from both east and west ends. The long south front was attacked everywhere. Every day saw a gain somewhere, perhaps unimportant in itself but one which did its part in gradually reducing the strong enemy lines. Some strong points (in addition to that at Gona) were bypassed and later reduced by separate detached operations.

The steadiest advance was from the west, where troops coming from captured Gona advanced along the beach, mopping one strong point after another. On the night of 1/2 December the Japanese made another effort to land reinforcements from ships. Again the allied air forces intervened. There was a good sized air battle with the enemy overhead cover, our aviators reporting 23 enemy Zero planes shot down. Our own losses were not given. No loss of enemy ships having been claimed, it is assumed that they accomplished, at least in part, their mission of landing troops. Later on the 2nd the allied attack reached the outskirts of Buna.

On December 5th the Japanese commenced to land supplies by parachute. The Japanese air force appears to have been based on airfields near Lae, the former capital of Northeast New Guinea, which at one time had been a German colony. This is within 200 miles of the Buna area.

The last of the Japs in Gona was killed on December 8th and the route through that small village opened. It turned out that the enemy garrison had been a battalion with 456 men present for duty; 440 bodies were buried and 16 Japs taken prisoner. On this day the air force attacked 8 Japanese destroyers, who once more were seeking to land troops to aid their beleaguered forces at Buna. One Jap destroyer is reported sunk. The remainder apparently succeeded in landing some men, while a strong Japanese counterattack was launched from near Sanananda to divert the attention of our planes.

December 19th the air force discovered that a Japanese force of some strength had been landed during the preceding night at the harbors of Madang and Finschafen, on the far or west side of Lae. At date of writing the mission and strength of this new force are unknown. It is reported as establishing new bases, for some purpose not yet disclosed. On this day large and heavy allied attacks were made to level off Capt Endaiadere (where some enemy posts had remained) and the vicinity of the mouths of the Amboga and Kunussis Rivers, really creeks (on our left). The fighting was heavy, and 196 enemy dead were found on the field. After dark a considerable number of Japanese planes raided our rear areas. Perhaps they had heard of the arrival of American tanks.

On the 20th a general attack was launched by the allies. Tanks were covered by an artillery barrage and provided with overhead air cover. Infantry followed closely. Bitter fighting developed. The enemy's position was not captured, but it was dented. On the 21st the attack continued in the same manner, by united action of all arms. This day our troops overran the main line of resistance, capturing pill boxes, concrete works, and other defenses. Notwithstanding this battle the Air Force found time to send planes to Finschafen, where they sank two medium cargo ships. The allied offensive continued for two more days, making but slow progress due to the intricate nature of the enemy's works and his desperate resistance.

On December 24th the allied assault was renewed with all available strength. Both flanks of the enemy and his center were attacked simultaneously. Tanks and artillery, infantry and planes concentrated on the remaining points in the enemy main line of resistance which had not been taken. Before this determined advance the Japs were overwhelmed and driven back to the citadel of their position. This consists of a narrow strip of coast not over 600 yards deep and about a mile long, with its center at Cape Giropa. Here the allied attack temporarily stopped. Next day was Christmas, and General MacArthur ordered a suspension for that day of all activities other than necessary safety measures.

The end of the Japanese position at Buna appears to be rapidly approaching.

MISCELLANEOUS

The Australian and American Air Forces have given great attention to the island of Timor. It is kept under constant observation and hardly a day passes without allied planes attacking some installation on that island. It is receiving the same attention on the west as Munda in the Solomon Islands is receiving on the east. Both places seem to be under preparation for a future attack on the march to Tokyo.